Some Negative Remarks on Negation in Korean

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The aim of this paper is a modest one, namely to compare three hypotheses on negation in Korean and to test whether they can adequately account for the data. The goal of linguistic theory, like that of any other of the empirical sciences, is the construction and validation of an abstract hypothesis on the nature of an enormously complex entity called language on the basis of accessible data. To be more specific, a hypothesis a linguist is trying to construct is a model that provides the simplest explanation for all known facts and is capable of predicting other facts of a similar nature. With this criterion in mind, I will directly proceed to the discussion of a truly fascinating aspect of the Korean syntax: the problem of negation.

Since I first put forward a new hypothesis on Korean negation in 1967, the study of negation has become, it not the central, certainly one of the most widely discussed issues among younger Korean syntacticians and semanticists. Although there are quite a few unpublished materials, I will limit myself to the discussion of three published articles, Song (1970) published in *Linguistics*, Lee (1970) and Oh (1971) both of which appeared in *Language Research*. In all three articles Chomsky's generative transformational grammar is accepted as the theoretical model; they differ considerably, however, in minor detail from each other. My treatment is based on a long out-dated pre-*Aspects* model, while the latter two are couched in up-to-date models of Ross' performative analysis and of the Generative Semantics approach of Lakoff-McCawley-Postal in the tradition of 'the best theory.'

Let me briefly recapitulate my position without going into all the technical detail. Korean seems to be unique among all languages in that it has two negative counterparts to each affirmative sentence. Consider the following.

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* This paper was presented at the 25th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies held between March 30—April 1, 1973 at Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois. In view of the fact that the majority of audience were non-linguists, I tried to avoid as much technical discussion as possible.

1. John-un manwula-lul twutulki-n-ta[1]
   John-Top wife-Acc beat-Ind-St
   John beats his wife.

1a. John-un manwula-lul ani twutulki-n-ta
   Neg
   John does not beat his wife.

1b. John-un manwula-lul twutulki-ci-lul ani ha-n-ta
   Nom Vpro
   It is that John does not beat his wife.

Although the negative sentences (1a) and (1b) have been and still are considered by many linguists to be synonymous, I assumed them to be not totally synonymous. When the negative particle, *ani*, is dropped from sentence (1a), we get sentence (1), the only difference between two sentences being the presence in the one and the absence in the other of the negative particle, I took sentence (1a) to be the negative counterpart of sentence (1). I was also tacitly assuming that sentence (1b) was a negative counterpart of an affirmative sentence as yet unknown but different from (1), and the discovery of this unknown affirmative sentence would cast a new light on the question of negation.

In most languages, it is normally the case that when you add a negative particle or whatever other appropriate device to negate an affirmative sentence, you get a corresponding negative sentence and vice-versa. Thus when we add the negative particle *ani* to the affirmative sentence (1), we get the negative sentence (1a), and when we perform the reverse operation and drop the negative particle from the negative sentence (1a), we get the affirmative sentence (1). This extremely regular process fails to produce an expected result in case of (1b) and when we drop the negative particle from it, we get an ungrammatical string like the following.

2. *John-un manwula-lul twutulki-ci-lul ha-n-ta

There are, however, a number of grammatical sentences which closely resemble the ungrammatical sentence (2). Observe the following.

3. John-un manwula-lul twutulki-ki-{lul / nun / ya / to}-ha-nta

[1] The transcription system I have adopted here is essentially the Yale Romanization with minor modifications.

It is that John- { does / admittedly / surely / also } -beat his wife.

Before we discuss exactly what it is that makes these sentences in (3) grammatical on the one hand and sentence (2) ungrammatical on the other, let us look for negative counterparts of sentences in (3). When we negate these sentences by adding the negative particle in an appropriate position, namely, before the verb *ha-n-ta*, we get ungrammatical strings of the following sort.

3a. John-un manwula-lul twutulki ki- { lul / nun / ya / to } -ani ha-n-ta

We have just noted that the affirmative sentence (2) which was derived by dropping the negative particle from sentence (1b) was ungrammatical. Now we find that negative sentences constructed by adding the negative particle to sentences in (3) also result in ungrammatical sentences. In other words, the addition of the negative particle toan affirmative sentence which is grammatical or the deletion of the same particle froma negative sentence which is grammatical may sometimes produce an ungrammatical sentence.

The claim that an affirmative sentence in Korean has two negative correspondents is puzzling enough. But now we have to add to such an anomalous claim, a further confusing statement that Korean has two types of sentences one of which has only an affirmative but not a negative sentence and the other only a negative but not an affirmative sentence. Any description of the negation in Korean must account for such an apparent irregularity.

When we closely examine these two types of sentence, we note the following interesting facts. The grammatical negative sentence (1b) and ungrammatical negative sentences in (3a) are very much alike, while the ungrammatical affirmative sentence (2) is similar to the grammatical affirmative sentences in (3). Since the same subject and object occur in all these sentences regardless of their grammaticality, we might just as well compare verb forms in these sentences.

AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
2. *twutulki-ci-lul ha-n-ta	1b. twutulki-ci-lul ani ha-n-ta

3. twutulki-ki-{lul / nun / ya / to}-ha-n-ta

3a. *twutulki-ki-{lul / nun / ya / to}-ani ha-n-ta

Now observe the distribution of the elements that directly occur after the verb stem *twutulki* 'beat'. These elements are *ki* and *ci;* furthermore, they are in complementary distribution. Only the form *ci* is acceptable in a negative sentence as is illustrated by the grammatical sentence (1b) and the ungrammatical sentences in (3a). In affirmative sentences, only the other form *ki* is permissible: thus the sentences in (3) are all grammatical, while sentence (2) is not. On the basis of such an observation, I concluded that *ki* and *ci* must be variant realizations of the same element and their choice is determined by the presence or absence of the negative particle. This hypothesis, of course, can be confirmed or disconfirmed on the basis of empirical evidence and should be testable against actual Korean data available. Now consider the following sentences:

4. Mary-nun namphyen-ul ttayli-ki-lul ha-n-ta
   Mary-Top husband-Acc hit-Nom-Acc Vpro-Ind-St
   It is that Mary hits her husband.

5. Mary-nun namphyen-ul cha-ki-lul ha-n-ta[2]
   Mary-Top husband-Acc kick-Nom-Acc Vpro-Ind-St
   It is that Mary kicks her husband.

6. Mary-nun namphyen-ul ttayli-ki-to ha-ko cha-ki-to ha-n-ta
   also also
   It is that Mary both hits and kicks her husband.

Technical detail aside, I will assume that sentence (6) to be the result of coordinate conjunction of sentences (4) and (5). Now it is possible to negate either one of the two sentences contained in sentence (6). When we negate the first part, we get sentence (7) below.

7. Mary-nun nampyen-ul ttayli-ci-nun ani hay-to cha-ki-nun ha-nta
   Although Mary does not hit her husband, she kicks him.

Notice that the form *ci* shows up in the first part of sentence (7) which is being negated but the form *ki* remains unchanged in the second part. This is clear evidence in

[2] Although Oh might argue that both sentences (4) and (5) are unacceptable, I still believe that they are perfectly grammatical.

favor of my hypothesis. Let us negate the second part of sentence (6) this time to see whether we get the same result. Sentence (8) below is such a sentence.

8. Mary-nun namphyen-ul ttayli-ki-nun hay-to cha-ci-nun ani ha-n-ta
   Although Mary hits her husband, she does not kick him.

As we expected, the form *ci* appears in the second part which is being negated and the form *ki*, in the first part which is affirmative. Once again my hypothesis is supported by the existence of such a sentence. If both parts of sentence (6) are negated, we would expect the form *ci* to show up twice and that is exactly what happens in sentence (9).

9. Mary-nun namphyen-ul ttayli-ci-to ani ha-ko cha-ci-to ani ha-n-ta
   Mary neither hits nor kicks her husband.

By contrast, sentence (6) without the negative particle in either part contains the occurrence of the form *ki* twice. It is obvious, then, that the data I have examined so far render strong empirical support to my hypothesis. It must be asked, however, what contribution does this hypothesis make in solving multitudinous questions involved in negation, for unless a linguistically significant generalization can be made in terms of the hypothesis, an observationally correct statement alone is of little value.

Now let us go back to the ungrammatical sentences given earlier. The ungrammatical sentence (2) is derived by dropping the negative particle from sentence (1b) in an attempt to construct its affirmative counterpart. In the light of what I have discovered, the ungrammaticality of sentence (2) is perfectly explicable. Sentence (2) still retains the form *ci* which is acceptable only in the negative sentence after the negative particle has been dropped. Hence the ungrammaticality of (2). If we replace it with the form *ki*, we get a grammatical sentence, namely, the first one in (3). In the same manner, we can account for the ungrammaticality of sentences in (3a). In these sentences, we find the form *ki*, which is permissible only in the affirmative, being retained even after the negative particle has been added. By replacing *ki* with the appropriate form *ci*, we get grammatical sentences once again. It is clear by now that the fact that urgrammatical sentences are produced when the negative particle is added to an affirmative sentence or when it is dropped from a negative sentence is due to the failure to make such an adjustment. Of course, this statement applies not to simplex sentences like (1) and (1a), but only to complex sentences like (1b) and (3). Once my hypothesis is accepted, the anomalous claim that Korean has two types of sentences, one of which has only affirmative but not negative and vice-versa becomes spurious. More importantly, the universally accepted

mystery that Korean has two negative counterparts corresponding to a single affirmative sentence simply disappears, now that we have found the affirmative correspondent of the negative sentence (1b), namely, the first sentence in (3). I will repeat below for convenience this pair of sentences along with (1) and (1a).

10. John-un manwula-lul twutulki-n-ta
    "John beats his wife."
11. John-un manwula-lul ani twutulki-n-ta
    "John doesn't beat his wife."
12. John-un manwula-lul twutulki-ki-lul ha-n-ta
    "It is that John beats his wife."
13. John-un manwula-lul twutulki-ci-lul ani ha-n-ta
    It is that John doesn't beat his wife.

When we recognize the form *ci* to be a variant shape of the nominalizer *ki* which occurs exclusively in a negative sentence, we can match the negative sentence (13) with the affirmative sentence (12) to dispell for good the mist that has shrouded apparent irregularity in Korean negation. My claim, in short, is that Korean, like all other languages, has only one negative sentence corresponding to each affirmative one, not two as grammarians as well as naive native speakers believe. Sentences (11) and (12) are not negations of sentence (10) but rather negations of sentences (10) and (12) respectively. Thus, my hypothesis not only correctly accounts for the data we have examined so far, but also reveals underlying regularity governing the negativization process in Korean.

What I have said above is the gist of my argument in Song(1970), although I did touch upon many other interesting aspects of negation there and also in Song(1967). Formalization aside, I still believe that it is essentially a correct and plausible hypothesis. My young colleagues, however, reject it outright on the grounds that sentences (11) and (13) are synonymous and that, therefore, they must be derived from the same underlying structure, namely, sentence (10) plus a negative marker. In other words, they still adhere to the traditional view that Korean has two types of negative sentences which I took great pains to eliminate. Curiously enough, both Lee and Oh quietly acknowledge that *ci* is a variant form of the nominalizer *ki* while clamourously denying the relatedness between sentences (12) and (13).

As I have already pointed out, their crucial reason for rejecting my hypothesis is the synonymy between sentences (11) and (13). But what is synonymy anyway, and how

does a linguist go about proving the synonymy of two sentences? Or is it an axiomatic notion that requires no proof? If my argument for non-synonymy is not convincing, they do not even make an attempt to account for synonymy of two types of negative sentences. To keep the record straight, let me quote some of the sentences which my colleagues believe to be synonymous. Lee claims that following two sentences are synonymous.

14. [=Lee's(3)a] pi-ka o-ki-nun o-n-ta[3]
rain-SM come-Comp-Prt come-Tns-Dec
Anyway, it rains.

15. [=(3)b] pi-ka o-ki-nun ha-n-ta
rain-SM come-Comp-Prt do-Tns-Dec
Anyway, it rains.

As Lee correctly observes, (16) below is ungrammatical. But he fails to note that (17) also is ungrammatical while (18) is grammatical.

16. [=(9)] *pi-ka o-ci-nun ani o-n-ta
17. *pi-ka ani o-ki-nun o-n-ta
18. pi-ka ani o-ki-nun ani o-n-ta

It is obvious that the two instances of the verb, *o* "come", in sentence (14) must be either both affirmative or both negative. Now compare sentences (16-18) with the following.

16a. [=(5)] pi-ka o-ci-nun an ha-n-ta
17a. pi-ka ani o-ki-nun ha-n-ta
18a. pi-ka ani o-ci-nun ani ha-n-ta

Since all these sentences are grammatical, I am puzzled why two supposedly synonymous sentences (14) and (15) show such a discrepancy when they are negated. Note further that in (18) *ki* is retained while in (18a) it must be replaced by *ci*. As a matter of fact, we get ungrammatical strings if we replace *ki* in (18) with *ci* as sentence (19) illustrates. On the other hand, if we retain *ki* in sentence (18a), we also get an ungrammatical string (19a).

19. *pi-ka ani o-ci-nun ani o-n-ta
19a. *pi-ka ani o-ki-nun ani ha-n-ta

[3] The numbers given in square brackets are Lee's (1970). I toyed with the notion of deriving the pro-verb *ha* in the manner suggested by Lee but came to a conclusion that it is not feasable to do so in view of many difficulties involved, some of which I discussed here.

Most important of all, sentences (18) and (18a), which we expect to be synonymous, turn out to be antonymous, instead. Sentence (18) means that 'it doesn't rain after all' despite the apparent double negative construction, while sentence (18a) implies that 'it rains.' Thus, Lee's claim that sentences (14) and (15) are synonymous is questionable. Nevertheless, Lee jumps to the unwarranted conclusion that (16a) is the negative counterpart of both (14) and (15). When the synonymy of sentences (14) and (15) is either questioned or proved to be otherwise, Lee's ingenious arguments built around such a dubious assumption is bound to collapse or be shaky at the least. Let me quote another example of Lee's, the grammaticality of which is at best quite marginal.

20. [=24b] na nun ku salam-i tocehi ku kes-ul halsu
iss-ta-ko mit-ci ani ha-n-ta
I do not believe that that man can ever do it.

Although I am inclined to think that this sentence is ungrammitical, I will not deny the fact that it may be marginally interpretable. Note that the word *tocehi* 'ever' is a negative polarity item, found only in a negative environment. If this sentence is interpretable at all, it is due to the fact that sentence (20) as a whole is a negative statement and a forced interpretation is imposed on it by analogy. Furthermore, there is a scrambling rule of a sort which moves around major constituents in a sentence and an adverb can occur almost freely in any position in a sentence. Clearly, these factors must have contributed to make sentence (20) marginally acceptable. But no Korean would, even marginally, accept the following.

21. *na-nun ku salam-i enehak-ul cokum-to a-n-ta-ko
sayngkak ha-ci ani ha-n-ta
22. *na-nun ku salam-eykey ton-i cokum-to iss-ta-ko
sayngkak ha-ci ani ha-n-ta

We get grammatical sentences, however, when we either negate an embedded instead of a matrix sentence or move the neg-polarity item (*cokum-to* 'at all') outside an embedded sentence. See the following examples.

21a. na-nun ku salam-i enehak-ul cokum-to molu-n-ta-ko
sayngkak ha-n-ta
I think he doesn't know linguistics at all.
21b. na-nun ku salam-i enehak-ul a-n-ta-ko cokum-to
sayngkak ha-ci ani ha-n-ta

I don't think at all that he knows linguistics.

22a. na-nun ku salam-eykey ton-i cokum-to ep-ta-ko
saŋngkak ha-n-ta
I think he doesn't have any moneyat all.

22b. na-nun ku salam-eykey ton-i iss-ta-ko cokum-to
sayngkak ha-ci ani ha-n-ta
I don't think at all that he has any money.

If sentence (20) were fully grammatical, sentences (21) and (22) should also be fully grammatical. But they turn out to be not even marginally acceptable. Consequently, Lee's Neg Transportation rule based on questionable data can be hardly convincing.

It is not difficult to marshall counterexamples to question the validity of Lee's hypothesis. Time and space, however, do not allow me to go into the details here. Furthermore, his theoretical foundation has been thoroughly disconfirmed by a brilliant argument presented in Oh (1971). I will now proceed to examine the hypothesis, which Oh presents in his work as a solution to the controversy concerning Korean negation.

Oh's theory of negation is not only the latest, but certainly the most interesting and well-argued approach, presented in the framework of Generative Semantics, one of the most up-to-date models in linguistic theory. His hypothesis, however, is, like Lee's, built upon such elusive and nebulous notions as synonymy and grammaticality that it is extremely difficult to pass any judgment on his claims. Many of the setences he rejects are grammatical to my judgment, while some of his grammatical sentences are hardly acceptable to me. When we have dialectal or idiolectal conflicts, we lose a common ground for discussion and the argument one party presents becomes to the other party. This dilemma is eloquently expressed by Fillumore:

> Today's grammarian finds little comfort in this principle (=Chomsky's clear case principle), because he knows, if he has read Ross's thesis (Ross 1967), that the kinds of arguments that seem to bear very crucially on the nature and operation of syntatic systems involve him in grammticality decisions that are extremely difficult to make."[4]

Although Oh simply dismisses my hypothesis as something not even worthy of consideration on the grounds of the complete synonymy of sentences (11) and (13), he presents no evidence whatsoever for their synonymy. Let me give a few examples which may cast some doubt the complete synonymy of two types of negative sentences which he takes it

[4] Fillmore (1972). p. 7.

for granted. Consider the following.

23. ani toy-e (tway)!
    Don't!/No!
24. ? toy-ci ani hay!
25. ani doy-n-ta
    It won't do./No.
26. tcy-ci ani ha-n-ta
    It doesn't turn out right.
27. ani toy-ess-ta
    Sorry./Too bad.
28. toy-ci ani ha-ess-ta
    It didn't turn out right.

According to Oh as well as Lee, the members of each of the sentence pairs (23-24), (25-26), and (27-28) must be completely synonymous to each other, which in fact is not the case. The sentencehood of (24) is questionable as an intended command, which I have indicated by the question mark in front of it. Since Lee and Oh have rules to derive each pair of sentences from a common underlying structure, they must account for semantic differences between the sentences of each pair by some *ad hoc* device. They might still claim that in the majority of cases, two types of negative sentences are synonymous and an exception or two does not pose any problem. After all, these idiosyncratic deviances can be taken care of as idioms. But are they the only cases where a pair of negative sentences show such a semantic discrepancy? Now consider the following.

29. *ani molu-n-ta
    Neg not-know-Ind-St
30. molu-ci ani ha-n-ta
    not-know-Now Neg Vpro-Ind-St
    It isn't that (he) doesn't know.
31. *ani ep-ta Neg
    not-exist-St
32. ep-ci ani ha-ta
    not-exist-Nom Neg Vpro-St
    It isn't that-{there isn't anything. / someone doesn't have (it).}.

We must ask once again why sentences (29) and (31) are not grammatical while sentences (30) and (32) are, despite their claim of complete synonymy. Let us consider just one more set of examples:

33. ku ai-ka pelsse ttena-ass-ta
    that child-NM already depart-Past-St
    The child has already left.
34. *ku ai-ka pelsse ani ttena-ass-ta
35. ku ai-ka pelsse ttena-ci ani ha-ess-ta
    It isn't that the child has already left.

If the case I have discussed earlier contains some rather special lexical items like *toy* 'become', *molu* 'not-know', and *ep* 'not-exist/have', the present case is much more general and cannot be dismissed as an exception. Again, the grammaticality decision is crucially involved here and Oh might not agree with me as to the status of the grammaticality of sentences (34) and (35). If, however, the majority of native speakers of Korean agree with me in their intuitive judgment of these sentences, Oh's theory will be clearly jeopardized. I claim that the lexical item *pelsse* usually occurs in affirmative sentences (that is, it is an affirmative polarity item). Therefore, sentence (34) is ungrammatical. Sentence (35), however, is a complex sentence and since the negative particle is outside the embedded sentence which contains *pelsse*, it is readily acceptable.

There are more serious questions concerning which I would like to take issue with Oh, but the time limitations do not allow me to go into detail now. I intend to discuss the theoretical as well as technical aspects of his paper elsewhere.[5] Even though I consider *ha* as a pro-verb as he suggests (similar to English *do*), sentences like (12) can be viewed as a case of object noun phrase complementation. Then we can easily formulate a single rule of negativization which will apply uniformly, without recourse to complicated formal mechanisms of the sort Oh proposes. I am still in doubt as to how sentences like (36) can be accounted for with his rules which derive both (37) and (38) from the same underlying structure.

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[5] Despite a tremendous advance in descriptive apparatus now available to a linguist, very little progress has been made in the study of negation in Korean. Since I have accumulated some more interesting data on the subject, I am preparing a new article entitled "Korean Negation Revisited", in which I intend to discuss more fully the two articles whose inadequacies I barely had time to point out.

36. pi-ka ani o-ci ani ha-n-ta
    rain-Nm Neg come-Nom NegVpro-Ind-St
    It isn't that it is not raining.
37. pi-ka ani o-n-ta
    It doesn't rain.
38. pi-ka o-ci ani ha-n-ta
    It doesn't rain.

Clearly his *Neg-Incorporation* and *ha-Addition* rules cannot have been applied simultaneously. Since my obtuse mind is not enlightened by these two latest articles, I am left with no other choice than to hold to my working hypothesis until a better and more convincing alternative is presented.

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